The Progressive Review

Nbr 297 April 1991

Questions from a press briefing never held

When did George Bush and the Pentagon know the Iraqi military was so weak?

It was not just Saddam Hussein who claimed the war would be the Mother of Battles. The Pentagon, Bush and the American media all agreed. But the facts of the war, meagre as they are, suggest something quite different. Either US intelligence was awful, which is highly unlikely, or the administration deliberately misled Congress and the public as to the nature of the Iraqi threat, perpetrating a major propaganda hoax to justify military action and an easy victory.

From the start, the Iraqi response to the war was not that of a nation with an aggressive military plan and the force to back it up, but rather that of a weak country somewhat desperately attempting to jury rig a defense. Consider, for example:

- The near absence of any air engagement by the Iraqis. In fact, the major movement of the Iraqi air force was to the shelter of Iran.
- The lack of air defenses in Baghdad. Although the anti-aircraft batteries firing into the night looked impressive on television, they were largely of a primitive variety that didn't even have the range to reach the allied planes. US intelligence undoubtedly knew this before the war began.
- The reliance on SCUDS, missiles so outdated that if they were automobiles they would almost qualify for antique license plates.
- The lack of any meaningful offensives by Iraqi troops with the exception of one minor foray into Khafji. Even military officials admit that the tank battle at the end of the war was only designed to protect retreating Iraqi soldiers.

Most significant, however, was the failure of Iraqi troops to respond to the US ground offensive. The propaganda from the Pentagon was that the Iraqis were surprised by the skill, speed and size of the American force. It is far more likely that the passive response was due to an uncertain combination of other factors including the death and demoralization caused by the American aerial massacre, a conscious effort by outgunned Iraqis to reduce casualties in what they knew would be a defeat and a physical presence on the battlefield that may have been less than the Pentagon claimed.

That the administration lied to the public and the Congress is not mere speculation or paranoia. The March 5 Washington Times quoted a Defense Department official as saying, "A lot of what was said from here was carefully orchestrated disinformation." The administration, it would seem, not only prevaricated, but is now bragging about it.

■

A great victory needs a enemy both willing and able to have prevented it. Otherwise the operation parallels not the annals of Patton, but such dismal excesses as the Italian bombardment of the hapless Ethiopians. There is now little doubt in which category the Iraqi war belongs.

In article written for Time magazine, Yevgeni Primakov, the Soviet negotiator, describes a remarkable exchange with Hussein on October 5. The Iraqi leader offered a long list of grievances against Kuwait, Israel and the west. Primakov then writes:

"Doesn't it seem to you that just like the Israelis, you have a Masada complex?" I asked Saddam. He nodded his head.

"But then your actions will to a great extent be determined by the logic of a doomed man?" I asked.

It seemed to me that Saddam also agreed with this, but he said nothing in reply.

Had Saddam truly planned to challenge American power he would have, for starters, moved into Saudi Arabia when the coast was clear. As one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pentagon official put it: "Had Iraq occupied Saudi ports and airfields, the buildup as we know it would have been impossible." The burning of the oil fields *before* the ground offensive started was another indication of the Iraqi assessment of the future of its gambit.

It is reasonable to assume that the Iraqis knew all along that they could not defeat the Americans and were simply bluffing while they played whatever political cards remained. What is more important, however, is that Bush and his government also probably knew it, but pretended they didn't.

The administration and the media created an image of a force of a half million trained and tough troops arrayed against this country and its limited partners. The Republican Guards were never mentioned without being called "elite." There were 500,000 land mines in Kuwait, trenches of fire to stop tanks, the threat of chemical warfare mentioned in every news update, huge underground fortifications and so forth.

On almost every point the reality was dramatically at odds with the picture the Pentagon had painted. The massive Iraqi army, for example, simply disappeared into the sands. Even subtracting estimated number of POWs, deaths and desertions, the numbers do not quite compute.

Was the American massacre even larger than the shocking projection of 85,000 of a Saudi official? Had enormous numbers of Iraqi soldiers slipped back into their homeland even before the ground war started? Or had they never been there in the first place in the numbers that the Pentagon claimed?

Certainly some pool reporters were hard pressed to find the Iraqis or their defenses. One reported on Feb. 26: "Iraq's defenses seemed meager. Despite prewar descriptions of massive earthen berms, minefields and oil-filled trenches, Iraqi troops were found to be dug in largely around aging Soviet-made T-55 tanks surrounded by rudimentary trenchworks and bunkers that seemed designed primarily as defenses against bombing attacks... Other bunkers were dug deep into the desert pan and broadened into interconnecting rooms, but nowhere were they organized well enough to slow the Marine advance... At one point along the first Iraqi defense line, poorly laid anti-personnel mines could be seen sticking out of the sand in neat rows, making them easily disposable by US combat engineers. With no resistance to speak of at the first defense line and little at the second, the engineers swiftly cut lanes through all minefields in their path, allowing assault traffic to move smoothly from the moment the attack began."

Another pool reporter on the same guided tour wrote "The 24th [Infantry Division] began conducting reconnaissance missions across the border about a week ago to assess the strength of Iraqi troops deployed against them. What they found surprised them. There were few Iraqi tanks, troops or bunkers. And there were none of the mine fields, concertina wire or fire ditches that the Iraqis had put in place along Saudi border with Kuwait." The reporter quoted a helicopter pilot as saying, "Not only is there nothing there, there is absolutely nothing there."

NPR's Scott Simon, on a lengthy helicopter tour, could find no bodies and only 19 Iraqi tanks. He suggested that the ordinary soldier with his M16 had essentially no role in this conflict. Air power had done the work for them.

Further, early in the war there was a report that a television network had received foreign

The Progressive Review
Bucking the System Since 1966

The Progressive Review is published approximately 9 times a year. Formerly the DC Gazette. One year subscription: $13. Two year subscription: $23. Single copies: $1.50. The Review uses the news services of College Press Service, Pacific News Service, and the National Student News Service. The Review monitors both Compuserve and Peacenet.

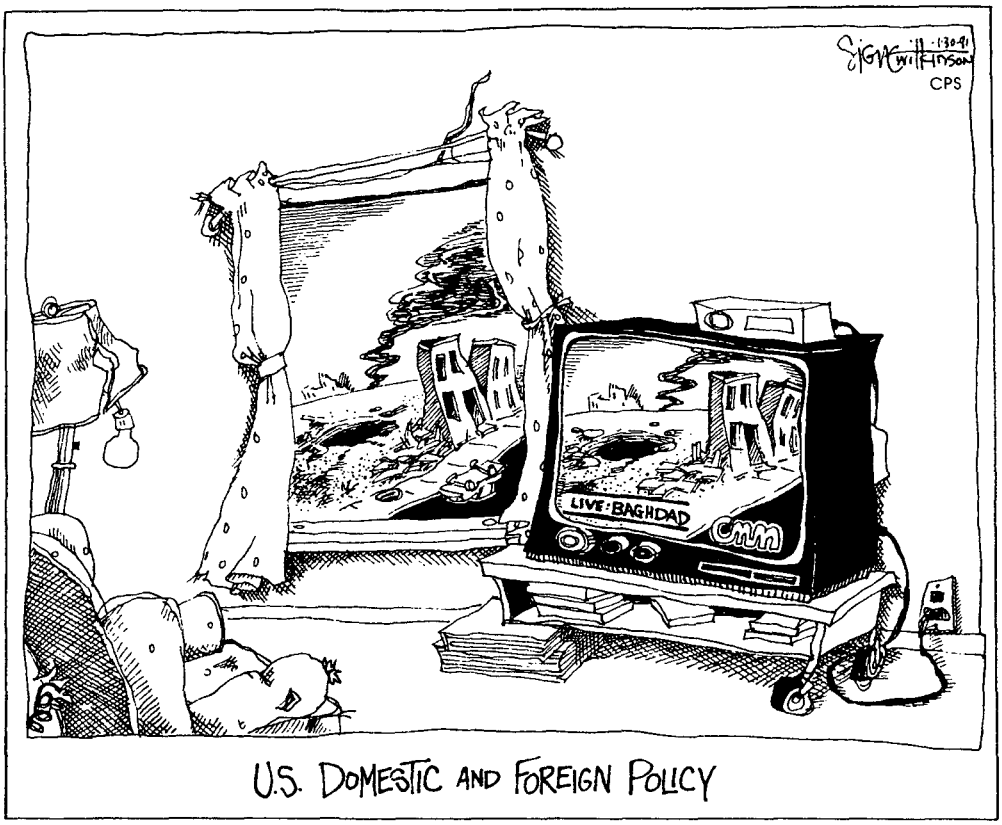
Editor: Sam Smith
The Progressive Review
1739 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington DC 20009
202-232-5544
Fax Nbr: 202-234-6222
Compuserve ID# 72067,1525
Peacenet Handle: ssmith

Become a supporting subscriber: Many small circulation publications keep going with the help of supporting subscribers who contribute a sum in addition to their regular subscription to aid the publication in its work. You will note on your renewal form that there is such a category. We will be grateful if you indicate your support of our efforts by subscribing or renewing with a contribution above the normal fee or by sending us a contribution today. Mail to the Progressive Review, 1739 Connecticut Ave NW DC 20009

Help spread the word: To introduce the Review to friends through a free trial subscription, just write their names and addresses on a postcard and send it to the Progressive Review, 1739 Conn Ave NW Washington DC 20009

Review Index: Indices are available the Progressive Review and the DC Gazette for the following periods:
1969-1972: $4.00 1984-1990:$4.00

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



satellite photos that showed a stunning absence of Iraqi troops where they were meant to be. The photos were so out of sync with the conventional wisdom that the network declined to use the photos.

Because of the extraordinary press censorship and official lying, there is much we don't know about what was actually going on in the battlefield. We do know that arrayed against a minor military power -- the size of California with one-third less population and with no effective air force -- were 75% of America's tactical aircraft, 42% of its modern battle tanks, over a third of its army and 46% of its marines and aircraft carriers, plus significant support from over a score of allies.

We launched this war to stop the "new Hitler." When it was all over one general described the conflict this way: "You had a high school team playing the Super Bowl against the New York Giants and they got their ass whipped."

There is a massive metaphorical inconsistency here that deserves examination. When one considers this "great military victory," it is well to keep in mind that it had everything except a comparable enemy, may never have been a real war, and that our government apparently knew it all along.

■

Why did George Bush refuse repeated offers for a negotiated settlement?

When Saddam Hussein offered to withdraw from Kuwait in February, George Bush called the proposal "a cruel hoax." William Beeman, an anthropologist and PNS columnist, notes that Bush's claim that Hussein had put conditions on the withdrawal was simply not true. The post-war agenda that Hussein attached to his offer used terms drawing from the Arabic root *rbt.* Says Beeman: "This literally means *tie* but its more common use is *relationship.* In one form it can mean kinship tie. But in everyday parlance it is used to say things like 'with regard to,' 'relevant to,' and 'pertaining to.' In no sense does the word ever mean *condition.*

"In short, Saddam's offer was genuinely different from earlier proposals. He was not establishing conditions for withdrawal from Kuwait, only listing issues which were 'related' to settling the Gulf issue."

Hussein's February offer was only the last in a long string of peace feelers put out by Baghdad. As Beeman reported here last fall: "By late August, Iraq had sent three clear signals to the United States that they wanted to bargain. The first two signals were offers to withdraw from Kuwait, first if Israel would withdraw from the West Bank and second if the United States would withdraw entirely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the region. The third signal was given by Tariq Aziz... calling directly for negotiations. These were unmistakable opening gambits in the bargaining process."

But it goes back even further. On July 26, as Iraqi troops were moving towards Kuwait, Patrick Tyler wrote in the Washington Post:

"Iraqi President Saddam Hussein yesterday sent an urgent message to President Bush... expressing Iraq's desire to end the crisis in the Persian Gulf peacefully and avoid a confrontation with the United States, according to administration officials...

"The Iraqi message was conveyed yesterday morning when Saddam Hussein summoned US Ambassador April Glaspie for a rare audience. During it, Saddam Hussein said he felt 'betrayed' that US warships in the Persian Gulf had been deployed for short-notice maneuvers intended, US officials said, to head off Iraq aggression toward its much smaller neighbor.

"Saddam Hussein told Glaspie that there was no need for a US military response and that he did not understand it..."

It was subsequently reported that Glaspie had dismissed the Kuwaiti dispute as a border matter in which the US had no interest. Glaspie herself was returned to the US and has been held incommunicado by the administration ever since.

From that time on, Bush assiduously rejected every diplomatic overture made by Iraq, although periodically claiming interest in a peaceful solution. According to the Primakov account, the Soviet Union made a number of efforts to settle the matter diplomatically, long before the last moments of peace.

Primakov and the Soviet government, as well as many Middle East specialists, understood that as bad as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait had been, a peaceful resolution of the conflict required dealing with Hussein's paranoia, his country's need for a retreat with dignity, and respect for Iraq's just grievances. Primakov notes, for example, that at his Oct. 5 meeting with Hussein, the Iraqi leader said that if he had to choose between falling on his knees and surrendering or fighting, he would choose the latter. These, from the start, were the only choices Bush gave him.

And Primakov quotes Hussein as saying:

"As a realist I understand the true state of affairs. Yet I cannot resolve the question of Kuwait if it is not tied up with the solution to other problems of the region... However, I want to make one thing clear. The time linkage and the process leading to a solution of the Palestinian problem are to be discussed at negotiations."

This represented an important modification of Hussein's position in August when he declared that the two problems should be solved in tandem. Now he was apparently willing to settle for serial consideration. To a minimally competent negotiator this was a step forward.

About two weeks later, Primakov arrived in Washington to talk with an administration that had not even bothered to establish any direct contacts with the Baghdad government with which it was so obsessed. He didn't receive encouragement. NSC head Brent Scowcroft, said Primakov, "was more interested in our perceptions of the situation in Iraq than in the proposals for getting out of the crisis." Bush seemed interested in another Soviet meeting with Hussein, but with the limited focus of informing the Iraqi "about the uncompromising position of the US."

Primakov moved on to London where he met with Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher commenced an hour-long monologue "in which she outlined in a most condensed way a position that was gaining greater momentum: not to limit things to a withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait but to inflict a devastating blow at Iraq, 'to break the back' of Saddam and destroy the entire military, and perhaps industrial, potential of that country."

There was this exchange, according to Primakov:

"So you see no other option but war?" I managed to get in with difficulty.

"No," Thatcher replied.

Thus by late October, Primakov suggests, the allies had apparently decided on war. Everything that followed, including the congressional debate, was simply for show. Primakov's second meeting with Hussein (which produced further compromises) and subsequent Soviet efforts were, as far as the Bush administration was concerned, irrelevant.

Further light on this matter has been shed by an important article by Michael Emery in the March 5 Village Voice. During a four-month investigation of the war's beginnings, including a two-hour interview with Jordan's King Hussein, Emery developed a picture of the provenance of the war quite at odds with the public image. Just a few of his points:

■ The chief of Kuwait's security forces met with CIA chief William Webster in November of 1989, subsequently writing in a memo: "We agreed with the American side that it was important to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq in order to put pressure on that country's government to delineate our countries' common border. [The CIA said] broad cooperation should be initiated between us... [and] coordinated at a high level."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The CIA admits that the meeting took place but denounced the memo -- seized by the invading Iraqis -- as a hoax. When Emery read the letter to King Hussein he said "he felt it accurately describes US policy toward Iraq and Iran."

■ Besides the Glaspie conversation, the US had given several signals of support for Saddam Hussein and indifference about Kuwait, including a Saddam-stroking visit by a senatorial delegation in April, Secretary of State Baker's congressional testimony that same month and statements by Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly. On July 31, for example, Kelly told a congressional subcommittee: "We have no defense treaty relationships with any of the [gulf] countries. We have historically avoided taking a position on border disputes..."

■ An important part of Saddam Hussein's anger came from a feeling that other Arab states had reneged on promises to help pay the debt incurred in the war against Iran, which he saw as a war in the mutual interest of these states. Emery's sources tell him that the Saudis and Kuwaitis had each promised $10 billion to Iraq.

■ On July 30, King Hussein, after a visit to Baghdad, flew to Kuwait to urge the ruling family to ease its attitude towards Iraq. Writes Emery: "According to both the king and another participant, despite Saddam's army on their border the Kuwaitis were in no mood to listen. Why were the rulers of this tiny city-state so sure of themselves? Apparently, the Kuwaitis thought they knew something the Iraqis didn't."

Then Sheikh Sabeh said, "We are not going to respond [to Iraq]...If they don't like it let them occupy our territory...We are going to bring in the Americans."

■ On August 2, King Hussein had a telephone conversation with Saddam Hussein in which he urged the Iraqis to withdraw. Saddam said, "Well I will withdraw, it is a matter of days, perhaps weeks." The king said, "No, don't talk about weeks, only a matter of days." Saddam then said the planned condemnation by Arab leaders in Cairo would not help.

■ King Hussein, who thought he had worked out a peace plan, believed that Egypt Mubarak sabotaged it by reneging on a pledge not to publicly condemn Saddam Hussein and that American and British pressure was behind this change of heart.

The question that must be answered is why Bush took such a perversely rigid position. Let us stipulate that Hussein was 95% in error. In that five percent were real grievances, the recognition of which might have saved tens of thousands of lives and enormous physical and environmental damage. But Bush would have none of it.

In this one instance we will not have to pay a proportionate cost of his intransigence. But consider this: what if Bush had been president at the time of the Cuban missile crisis and had applied the same principles? On second thought, forget it. If Bush had been president, we might not even be here to consider it.

The Cuban missile crisis was resolved because the Kennedy administration carefully took bits and pieces of Soviet positions as rambling and inconsistent as those of Hussein and used them to move the Russians towards a coherent and peaceful solution. The Kennedy team, of course, acted as though they were grown-ups with some moral core, not like teenaged hoods looking for a fight because it was all they knew how to do.

Certainly the current president's terminal adolescence helps to explain his behavior. Bush lives in a infantile world of good guys and bad guys, sorted out simply by their obeisance or obstinacy towards him.

His distaste for complexity also helps to explain his actions. Thatcher's early and persistent hawkishness contributed as well. Thatcher has been far more influential on the Reagan and Bush administrations than any member of Congress.

But something more may have been afoot: the possibility that the Pentagon and National Security Council had actually been out shopping for an enemy. There are indications, for example, that the Pentagon and the White House had considered a major military operation in the Andes, using the excuse of the war on drugs, but had rejected the plan as too risky. Castro's Cuba may have been eyed as a target -- and may be one yet. Then Hussein hove in sight. Or was pushed there.

Was April Glaspie baiting Hussein, knowingly or unknowingly, for Bush's Iraqi sting operation? Was it mere coincidence that prior to the Kuwait annexation, General Schwarzkopf and his command held a wargame based on the following scenario: What if Iraq invades Kuwait? Some of the strategy for the real-life adventure that followed was reportedly developed during that wargame.

If the game and the reality were connected it would not have been the first time. Prior to the Grenada invasion, the US military staged a wargame using a fictitious island that bore remarkable resemblances to the one that would be subsequently invaded.

We must at least consider the possibility that from an early stage, Hussein was being set up as the next Noriega in Bush's game of musical Hitlers and that the Iraqi dictator was just paranoic and egomaniacal enough to fall into the trap.

■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Can we talk about linkage now?

Of all the costly inanities uttered by the president over the past few months, none was less supportable than his argument that the Kuwaiti and Palestinian annexations could not be linked.

The fact that he was so desperate not to have them linked was a good indication that they were. It is not an unreasonable supposition that one of the forces that created Saddam Hussein in the first place was Arab bitterness over the decades-long failure by Israel and the west to give Palestinians the self-determination they deserve.

As the New Yorker recently put it, Hussein did not invent the grievances in the region, "and they will not simply disappear when he is eventually gone. In the Middle East, 'linkage' is not some option to be debated. It is simple fact. The only real question is how many more wars will have to be fought and how many more lives will have to be lost before that fact is recognized."

That Hussein seized the issue out of self-interest and demagoguery is irrelevant. While demagogues may abuse a cause, their demagoguery does not prove it wrong. It merely adds one more insult for the cause to bear.

If Bush had not been so overflowing with hubris that he was unable to recognize the relationship between Palestine and Kuwait, he might have managed a truly great stroke: resolving two world-wrenching issues with one agreement. It was one more opportunity missed.

With the irony of history, however, the very success of the American effort may, in the end, force Israel's government to relent in its unsupportably cruel policy towards the Palestinians. It now makes neither moral nor strategic sense. Missiles do not respect buffer zones.

Why has the Palestinian cause been so neglected for so long? The politics of the Israeli and the US government have obviously been critical. But those of the progressive ilk have also played a role. Many, out of deference to American Jewish allies, have looked the other way, soft-pedalled rhetoric, found excuses, and sought shelter in vague expressions of hope for a resolution over an indeterminate time span.

On the merits, however, the Palestinian cause has been just as worthy of our time and effort as, say, the abuse of blacks in South Africa. Certainly, as we have seen in recent months, its international consequences have been greater.

Now not only has our government engaged in an immoral war but the causes of America's progressive movement have been severely damaged, in part due to our politeness over the Palestinian issue. We can no longer avoid it. We have become part of the linkage.

If there is one good thing that can come out of this miserable adventure, it is that American progressives will no longer be reticent in the face of this traditional taboo, that the progressive movement will find as much heart and courage to pursue Palestinian self-determination as it did the cause of black South Africa. We must tell Israel it is wrong as loudly as we tell our government it is wrong, not only because we believe both to be wrong but because of our faith in their capacity to be right.

■

How well did US weaponry really work?

Getting the answer to this is not an exercise in military exotica. It could determine how successful the Pentagon and the defense industry are in retaining control of America's economy and politics.

For example, military propagandists have been touting the success of the Stealth fighters. If conventional fighters had incurred high casualties and the Stealth hadn't there would be a case for the Stealth. But, in fact, neither incurred significant casualties and the Stealth was basically engaged in the same work as conventional fighters at far greater cost.

Eugene Carroll Jr. of the Center for Defense Information raises another question about our air power. Carroll points out that on Jan. 30, General Schwarzkopf reported that US aircraft had flown 790 sorties against 33 bridges in Iraq. He then showed films displaying the magnificent accuracy of the bombs. Carroll's question is "If every bomb hit a bridge, why was it necessary to make 790 attacks?" This equates to 12 attacks against each bridge, even assuming that half the sorties were by support aircraft.

Then there is the sainted Patriot missile, whose public relations triumph illustrates why car manufacturers spend so much time figuring out what to call their new models. The reality of the Patriot, however, is far less appealing than its name.

In the first place, the Patriot, contrary to congressional and media opinion, has nothing to do with Star Wars. The argument that the Patriot proves the validity of SDI is like saying that a tricycle proves the validity of a solar-powered car.

Secondly, the Patriot has yet to be tested against either aircraft or a modern missile. We only knows that it works pretty well against an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

outmoded, slow missile with no counteractive devices.

The Patriot aims for its target with the aid of radar. It is designed to damage the missile rather than to vaporize it. The problem is relatively simple with a SCUD in which the warhead and the body of the missile stay together. But with a modern missile, the warhead or warheads detach from the rest of the missile and the Patriot has to decide what to seek. In the case of an aircraft target, one would not have the smooth trajectory of a missile, making targeting more difficult. Thus, the Iraq experience has given us little information about the Patriot vs. anything but the ancient SCUDs.

In addition, we were repeatedly told that the Patriot missiles blew up incoming SCUDS and that the stuff falling to the ground was "debris." Depending on where the missile was damaged, the debris might or might not have included the warhead itself. In the case of the attack on the US barracks, officials admitted that the warhead had landed. But in how many other cases of SCUD attacks was the "debris" actually the warhead?

Many weapons systems were in the Gulf and will be credited as having proved themselves even though this is far from the case. Two important examples are the Bradley vehicle and the M1 tank. Because they were not tested in a real war, we do not know whether the critics concerns about the armor protection of the Bradley is justifiable. Nor do we know whether the M1 could function under true battlefield conditions. Its one good workout was against a demoralized, retreating Iraqi force in which the enemy tanks were outnumbered more than two to one.

You may recall the long shots of America's military might rolling across the desert. Those strange looking large vehicles, appearing like something out of a Mad Max movie, were the fueling trucks for the M1. They are very important because the M1 gets only about two gallons per mile [sic] even on the military equivalent of a freeway.

A typical M1 tank battalion consists of 58 tanks plus 16 ten-ton fueler trucks, 25 quarter-ton trucks and 31 2½ ton trucks. The tanks, of course, are well armored. Their vehicular support staff, is not. In a real war, an enemy, especially one with air power, might simply destroy the fueler trucks to disable a tank battalion.

These are just a few examples of why an honest analysis of weapons performance in the desert is essential.

Of course, if it is the intention of the American empire to go to war (as has recently been the case) only against third world countries with third rate militaries, then many of these weapons are, in fact, more than adequate. One's only remaining concern is how much taxpayers are paying for the psychic pleasure of massacring obstreperous non-white dependencies with tools originally designed to protect us from the Evil Empire.

■

What's an atrocity?

The concept of an atrocity is one that is subject to as much political manipulation in time of war as is the word *patriotism.* Generally speaking, in a war both sides commit atrocities, but only the enemy's are so described. Universally speaking, war itself is an atrocity.

Keeping in mind Dylan Thomas's comment following an air raid that "after the first death there is no other," here a list, compiled from the British section of Amnesty International and other sources, that might prove helpful in consideration of the subject:

Iraq: Torture, rape and random murder of an unknown number of Kuwaiti citizens. Endangering large numbers of citizens for an expansionist adventure of puerile motive. Deliberate oil spills and setting fire to hundreds of oil fields. Prior examples of extreme brutality include use of chemical warfare on Kurds and Iranians, resulting in thousands of deaths.

United States & allies: Initial reports from Iraq indicate that the civilian death toll may be in the tens of thousands. Early estimates of Iraqi military deaths from the US massacre against its army range from a low of 25,000 to a high of 100,000. Apparently, many of these deaths were caused *after* Iraq agreed to leave Kuwait and was in the act of doing so. To put these figures in some perspective, American combat deaths in Vietnam over a nine year period were approximately 47,000. The Iraqi deaths occurred in less than a month and a half. Other recent American atrocities include the killing of hundreds or thousands of innocent Panamanian citizens during the invasion of that country [For a chilling account of the invasion, see the recent report, *This is the Just Cause,* published by the Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America, A.P 189, Paseo del los Estudiantes, San Jose, Costa Rica.]

Soviet Union: Brutal repression of independence movements in various republics.

Saudi Arabia: Amnesty International reports that Saudi Arabian security forces have tortured and ill-treated hundreds of Yemeni nationals since the Gulf crisis began. Common Saudi tortures include beating the soles of the feet, sleep deprivation and hanging by the wrists accompanied by beating.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Israel: Placing Palestinian population of over one and a half million under house arrest during the course of the war, unable to shop, harvest, work, study or recreate. Numerous Palestinian civilians deaths over the years due to air bombardment, military attacks and individual assaults.

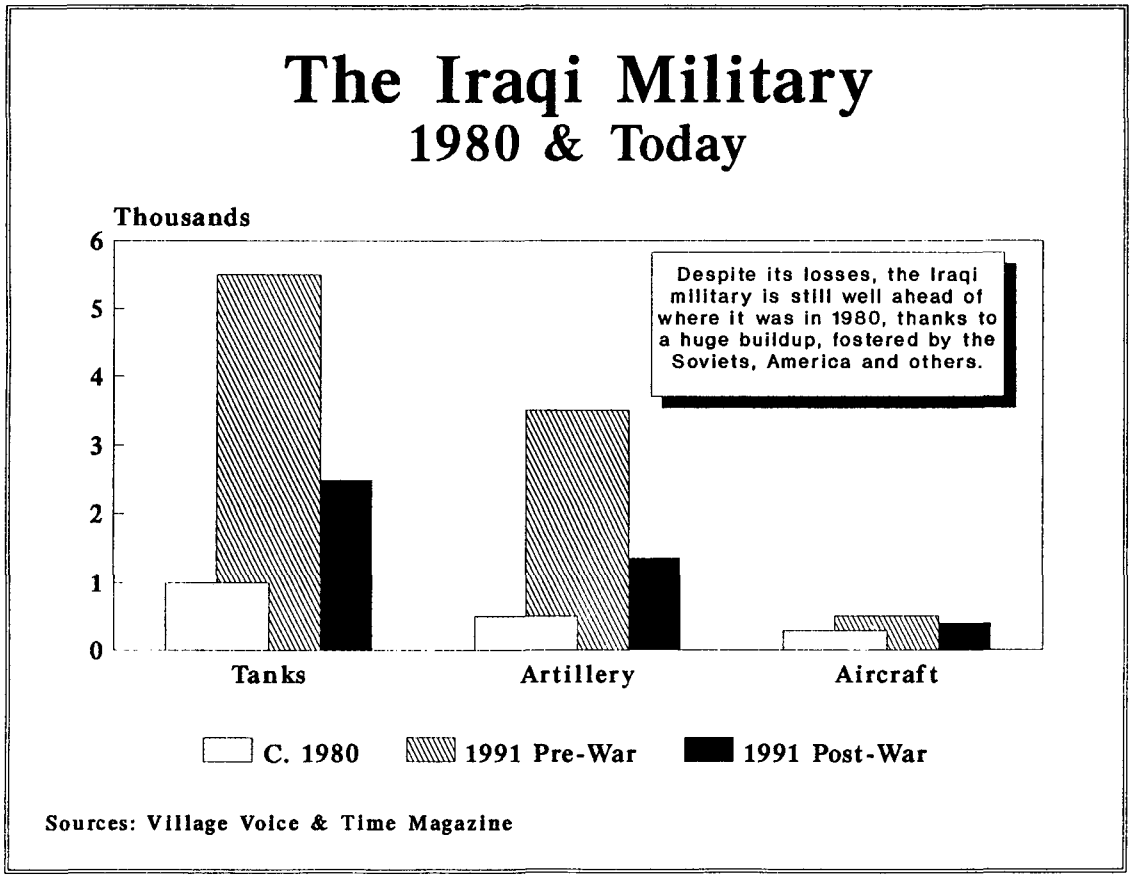
Syria: Systematic torture of political prisoners. Methods include rape, forcing objects in the anus and threats to sexually abuse prisoners' families.

Kuwait: Early reports of torture, rape and other brutality towards Iraqi prisoners and suspected sympathizers. A March 6 AP report recounted beatings with typewriters and chairs, cigarette burning, and fingernails pulled out.

Turkey: Favored tortures include hosings with ice cold water and electric shocks to the genitals. Turks who opposed the government's Gulf policy have been jailed. For example, Nevruz Turkdogan was arrested in Ankara for distribution of a journal of the Women's Association for Democracy. Despite pleading with the police that she was pregnant, she was severely beaten and thrown into a dark cell with a wet, concrete floor. She lost her baby in the prison toilet.

Said Amnesty International: "During the 1980s, Amnesty reported human rights abuses not just from Iraq but from every country in the Middle East. The world's governments had the opportunity to deal with these issues, but they did not. They paid no attention to the human rights records of countries to which they gave military, security and police assistance, despite the facts that such aid was being, or could be, used to commit further violations."

¶ The administration and the pundits said it wasn't another Vietnam. They were, of course, correct. As one historian has noted, the Spanish American War is a far better analogy, both in terms of military aims and the use of war as a psychic boost for a troubled country. But the Iraqi affair also has certain similarities with the War of 1812: Hawks from the south and west herding the nation to war, an embargo, claims that the embargo wasn't working, the wanton destruction of a capital city, the targeting of command and control centers (such as the White House and the Capitol) and the major battle occurring *after* a peace plan had been worked out in a third country. Like the recent conflict, the War of 1812 settled none of the issues that caused it and, in time, hardly anybody could remember why we fought it.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Weather Report

George Bush, who said he had no quarrel with the Iraqi people, appears to have killed over a hundred thousand of them anyway. And to what end? We appear to have subdued one dictator in Iraq, restored one in Kuwait and strengthened one each in Syria and Iran. In addition, we are left with a major environmental catastrophe, two countries blown to bits, a substantial addition to the national debt, and considerable damage to tripartite government and two-party politics. For this we're having a parade?

■

One residual question is whether the American annexation of Kuwait will last longer than Iraq's. Bush and his proconsul, General Schwarzkopf, are quite vague about this. In any case, the polite fiction of "liberation" is marred by news that the US military is going to be running things for some time. For example, the US Army drafted the martial law rules under which the news media will be controlled by the Kuwaiti government and all private publishing and broadcasting will be prohibited. Our army will also be helping to "staff" Kuwait's "Public Safety Operations Center."

■

It looks like those in the administration who would like to go after Cuba next may have to put Castro on hold again. On March 5, the Washington Times, in one of those stories that are to military action as croci are to spring, reported that satellite photos had discovered a poison gas plant in Libya. The second paragraph of the story had the unmistakable sound of a Pentagon stirring: "The buildings, discovered last month by a US reconnaissance satellite, represent a new stage in Tripoli's drive to establish a chemical weapons capability."

The buildings are "believed to house research facilities for biological weapons and possibly nuclear arms."

The Rabta plant had apparently burned last March, but US intelligence types have decided that was all a deception "aimed at deterring a US air strike." According to the Times, "Burn marks were painted on roofs of buildings, fires were set to produce smoke, and ambulances rushed to the area to make US intelligence think the plant had suffered severe damage.

"The Bush administration reacted with alarm when it learned about the Rabta plant. White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the plant 'is dangerous and becoming more so.'" You have been warned.

■

The Washington Post's Jim Hoagland wrote during the war: "Saddam knows more about American battlefield intelligence capabilities than all but a handful of other foreign leaders, thanks to Ronald Reagan, William Casey and aides... The Iraqi-US intelligence connection was the poisonous acorn from which sprouted a giant oak of misunderstanding between Baghdad and Washington... Reagan and Casey also forgot to warn Saddam that there were limits to America's tolerance of brutality and aggression."

■

US performance in the Persian Gulf tells us no more about America's ability to defeat an evenly-matched power than did Britain's performance in the Falklands. In both cases the Western nation involved brought enormous military power to bear in order to avoid even the slightest risk of an embarrassing defeat the hands of a less powerful adversary.

London's triumph in the Falklands' war did not bring back the empire, nor did it slow the long-term decline of Great Britain. -- *Michael Klare, PNS*

■

American troops last fall were given wallet-sized cards explaining "Why We Are Here." Included, along with some Bushbabble, was this succinct, if totally inaccurate assessment, from Proconsul Norman Schwarzkopf: "Our mission here is to deter attack and, if an attack comes, we are to defend."

■

Ralph Estes, John Cavanaugh and Felicia Kornbluh, all of the Institute for Policy Studies, did an analysis in early February of what a war would really cost. Aside from the immediate costs and what we paid for the buildup, you have to add about 278% of that figure for future veterans' benefits plus 240% for the interest on borrowing for the war.

A $30 billion war, for example, would actually end up costing about $200 billion.

■

Journalist Christopher Hitchens debated Charlton Heston on CNN, remarking that "It's not every day one gets to debate the Middle East with Moses himself."

■

A note to all concerned about Peter Arnett's lack of patriotism: Arnett is a New Zealander.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Springtime for Hitler

"Iraq is now the de facto protector of the regional status quo.. Its leaders no longer consider the Palestinian issue their problem... The United States might also consider upgrading intelligence it is supplying to Baghdad to balance the military damage done to Iraq by the arms-for-hostage swap... The fall of the existing regime in Iraq would enormously enhance Iranian influence, endanger the supply of oil, threaten pro-American regimes throughout the area, and upset the Arab-Israeli balance." -- *Daniel Pipes and Laurie Mylroie in the New Republic April 27, 1987, disintered recently by Peter Dykstra for the Greenpeace Pundit Watch.*

The Bush administration's more-of-the-same drug budget for next year has been attacked by the American Public Health Association, which represents 55,000 health professionals in the US. The APHA criticized the lack of adequate funding for drug treatment, the indifference to the problem of the legal drugs of tobacco and alcohol, and the emphasis on drug testing. The APHA called "appalling" the plans for revocation of user driver's licenses, employer notification and eviction from public housing. And it urged support for bleach distribution to drug users and pilot needle exchange programs.

■

Drug production in Lebanon has soared in the last decade, making that country a major trafficking center. Profits this years, according to the Drug Strategy Network, will be around $4 billion, three-quarters of it in exports to Egypt, Israel, Europe and North America. Beirut's leading newspaper publishes the local and international prices of hashish, opium and heroin each harvest season. In a good year farmers may get $500 for a ton of hashish that retails in the US for around $10 million says the DSN.

■

Ann Markusen, who heads the Rutgers Project on Regional and Industrial Economics, points out that the economic boom of the 80s was built on defense spending. In 1980, for example, the aircraft industry was 33% dependent on defense contracts, now the figure is 66%. During the 80s America lost a million manufacturing jobs, but *at the same time* there was an increase of 600,000 jobs in defense-related manufacturing. Markusen notes that the 'Massachusetts miracle' was based in no small part on defense spending.

Joining Markusen at a conference on economic conversion, Seymour Melman, chair of the National Commission for Economic Conversion and Disarmament, cited UN figures that found that for every $100 America put into civilian assets in 1987, it spent $54 in military capital projects. By comparison, Germany spent only $19 in military items for every $100 in civilian assets and the Japanese spent only $4. As Dwight Eisenhower said years ago, every weapon is a theft from the hungry, the unhoused and the unclothed.

The Progressive Review
1739 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington DC 20009 - 8922
Address Correction Requested

Use this form to
subscribe,
renew or
change your address

[ ] One year $13
[ ] Two years $23
[ ] Foreign $23
[ ] Contribution enclosed $_____

Mail with check or money order to address above

[ ] Please correct my address
as shown at right

SUBSCRIBER NEWSLETTER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED